



MAISON FORTUNÉ ORPHANAGE

An occasional bulletin to report progress of the children's orphanage in Hinche, Haiti. It is also available on the internet: www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti

October 2008

THE FLOOD

We thought the arrival of the girls would be our "headline story" this month, but the hurricane season relegated that good news to second place. (We resisted [almost!] using the "good news/bad news" cliché). Katie Gordon has been in Haiti since July as a Xaverian Volunteer--a more eventful two months than she anticipated. Her report here focuses on the flood.

First: all the children at Maison Fortuné are fine, though many people around us in our neighborhood have been left homeless. Many towns are suffering from flood damage and a number of people have died. Roads have been cut off, so getting clean water and food to many people is not easy. I can't imagine how people in those towns which suffered more damage than Hinche, are coping.

I didn't think we would get flooded out because we did not receive that much rain. I remember looking at the water flowing into the back of our orphanage where the land is lowest, not thinking it would come over onto the soccer field and into the buildings, nor did I think we'd have to put all the boys and girls into a dump truck to take them to safety.



The kitchen and dining building

Early Tuesday evening when the river behind us was high we thought it was all just fun. Before I went to bed around midnight the water had filled our garden, but hadn't come over the 3-foot wall onto the soccer field. Waking up at 3:00 a.m. to the sound of many voices, I found the water starting to seep into the administration building and forming a lake on our soccer field. That's when everything got crazy! The banks just could not contain all the water from the north flowing into the river. We were extremely unprepared, but luckily we had a place to take the boys and girls, St. Martin (the local high school that some of our older boys attend). They remained there for a week, but we finally got the campus sufficiently cleaned up and safe for them to return.

Nationally, school has been put off until October 6, more than a month late, because several of the private and public schools

are now shelters to homeless victims of the hurricanes.

Things are starting to seem somewhat normal again with the sound of the kids outside, but there are still a lot of repairs and cleaning up to do. We estimate the damage at over \$35,000. Offices are being reorganized and the school building is being put back together. The three small dorms need A LOT of work. Our water purification system is working again, as are some of our septic systems. We saved our generator, so we do have power. The cafeteria is usable again. The soccer field is still caked in mud in some places or has patches of crackling mud that has dried in the sun.

I could write a book! I knew that I would enjoy my time in Haiti and have many experiences, but I never thought they would be of this kind!

ANPIL DLO

David Peterson, a former Xaverian Volunteer in Haiti and now a campus minister at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, was visiting the orphanage at the time of the flood. Here is his account of the night of the flood.

I once read in a *Lonely Planet* guidebook, "You need an open mind and a sense of humor to survive in Haiti. It's no wonder that Graham Greene called his novel about Haiti *The Comedians*—there is always the suspicion that you are playing a part in a surreal comedy when you visit." When I returned to Haiti the first week of September with my friend Michelle, I couldn't think of a statement that described the situation better. After two days at the orphanage on the morning of September 2, Jean-Louis told us that he heard that "Cyclone Hanna" was going to hit Haiti. We assured him that we had just visited cnn.com, which said that the hurricane was going to bypass Haiti. Within the hour, though, the rain started and continued until we left 48 hours later.

Throughout that day, we checked on the rising river, never out of concern, merely out of curiosity. It wasn't until later that evening, around 8:00, that Jean-Louis voiced concern about the rising river. I was lying in bed after 10:00 when I heard Jean-Louis' voice and the commotion of the younger boys being moved to the higher dormitory. What I witnessed from that moment until the moment I left on the morning of September 4th was one of the most amazing and impressive things I have seen. Under the supervision of Jean-Louis and the orphanage staff, the boys started working and never stopped.

First, the older boys brought the younger boys and their mattresses to the higher dorm, tucked them in and made sure they went to bed. Sixty of the older boys continued working, splitting into groups. Some stayed on the premises and started moving all the food, charcoal, and cooking supplies from the kitchen to the second story of the school. Others worked with Jean-Louis and a neighbor with a truck in an attempt to salvage anything that the neighbors living closer to the river hadn't yet lost. I couldn't believe the concern that Jean-Louis and the boys had for the neighbors, when there was still work to be done at the orphanage. This work continued all through the night and moved from building to building as the water rose.



The evacuation of the smaller boys' dorms

Around 5:00 a.m. the decision was made to move the girls. If the water rose any higher, it would be nearly impossible to move those who were too little to walk out. Without hesitation, the older boys, who had been in the water all night without anything to drink or eat, went to the girls' building. One by one, they filed out, each with a little girl in his arms. Once the girls were safely moved, the dump truck returned for the younger boys. Now re-awakened, the boys found the orphanage covered in water. As if Jean-Louis had put in a pool for them, they ran and swam around splashing, running on logs, attempting to jump off the second story of the school, and having the time of their lives. They were all very disappointed when they had to leave their new playground to join Katie and the girls at St. Martin, the local high school.

Finally, it was time for us to leave the orphanage. Jean-Louis, Michelle and I waded out of the orphanage and up the streets to get to higher ground. The only two left at the orphanage were Brother Harry, who decided to ride out the storm, and Petris Joseph, the school principal, who was moving school supplies to the second floor. After dropping off Michelle and me at his own house, Jean-Louis went off to find food for the kids. A few hours later the three of us returned to the orphanage where the water had now receded somewhat; again we witnessed some of the older boys working. Now, they were carrying cooking supplies to St. Martin so they all could eat. At four in the afternoon all the children, still wearing the same wet clothing from the night before, finally received food and water.



When we left Hinche, mud covered the first floor of every building. Both wells were destroyed by the flood. Children were sleeping on classroom floors. It was devastating.

The boys at Maison Fortuné blew me away. I knew them all five years ago as children, and that night they proved to be men. They worked for days—cold, wet, hungry—and never complained, nor did Jean-Louis. They had their priorities in order. They took care of the children, the neighbors, and then worried about their own belongings. They survived this hurricane with a smile and a sense of humor. I must have heard the expression “anpil dlo” fifty times that night, “a lot of water.” There was a lot of water, but that’s not what I’ll remember most. This experience showed me the effect the Maison Fortuné orphanage has had on every child lucky enough to call it home. Jean-Louis has taken young abandoned boys and turned them into compassionate, thoughtful, and hardworking young men. The Maison Fortuné orphanage story is one of incredible success.

There are of course, many factors that led to this success: the Xaverian Brothers, the doers and donors, but most of all Jean-Louis. He has taught the children by example. He is a role model to all of them and to many of us as well. He never speaks about how much he does, or how hard it is; he just does it. The boys were impressive during those times, but it was because they had Jean-Louis, who never stopped working, as their leader. I cannot express how amazed I was during my time there. I am honored to have been with that amazing group of people during Cyclone Hanna. The courage, strength, and resilience that I witnessed are a testament to Jean-Louis and to all of you that have supported the orphanage.

A SAD SIDEBAR TO THE FLOOD STORY

Fifi Vilus, our senior housekeeper, has worked at Maison Fortuné from the beginning and has been a surrogate mother to many boys. Two years ago, our readers may remember, her husband, fishing for his family’s dinner, drowned in the river behind the orphanage. This year that same river took her house!

She and her own children were sheltered in a church while Maison Fortuné was flooded, but Jean-Louis has taken them in to live at the orphanage until they can find another place. Along with the cleanup and repair of the physical plant, we are helping folks like her with the recovery funds you’ve sent.

THE GIRLS HAVE ARRIVED!

From volunteer Katie Gordon we have this good news, written after Cyclone Fay, but before Gustav, Hanna, and Ike!



Some of the first Maison Fortuné girls in their new play-yard before the flood—those yellow chains hold the swings

An historic day for Maison Fortuné was Saturday August 16th when we started welcoming our first girls into their building next door. The day was a rainy one from yet another hurricane, but people came anyway. The total is now 26 girls helped by five workers: two watchmen (one for day/one for night) a laundry lady and two other women child-care workers. Jean-Louis' wife, Marie-Presta (known to everyone as 'Tata'), has also been a great help over there. I don't know what it is but the ladies seem to have more fun working with the girls—maybe because they are girls and much smaller than most of our boys! The girls add more laughter and happy noise to the sounds you hear sitting on the porch of the administration building. The girls' building looks very nice (maybe a little "girly"), and everything works fine inside and out (indoor plumbing, outdoor showers and toilets), and we have put up a swing-set for them, which they all enjoy, and a mini basketball court. You will enjoy it when you come!



Activities Director Frenèl Jean-Dieudonné

MAISON FORTUNÉ QUALIFIES FOR CFC!

The Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation has been advised that, thanks to a two-year effort led by former Board member (now Santa Fe NM resident) Ben Thomason, our application to the U.S. Government's **Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)**, the largest charity campaign in the United States, has been accepted. The orphanage is now an approved charity and is listed under the **National/International Independent Agencies** at number **12234**. The mission of the CFC is to promote and support philanthropy through a program that is employee-focused, cost-efficient, and effective in providing federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all. The 2008 campaign runs until **December 15th**.

All federal civil servants, military and postal donors can designate Maison Fortuné Foundation, Inc. as their supported charity during this year's appeal. If you fit into this category, please take advantage of the opportunity to designate all or part of your CFC contribution to the orphanage.

OTHER NEWS FROM KATIE GORDON AND LEFORT JEAN-LOUIS

This report on the past summer was finished before the flood.

This past summer was exceptional because of all the important events that took place—for example, our July summer school program with Brother Michael McCarthy and ten seminarians. All of the kids really enjoyed it. The seminarians taught French, chemistry, physics, math, and provided reading time in the library. Ilsa Leon and Brother Mike helped out math in the younger grades, and Peter Everest was a tremendous help with a lot of manual labor like picking up trash, picking up rocks from the soccer field, helping to clean the girls' building. We wish we could have had the two of them for a longer stay! The kids really enjoyed their presence and it is obvious that they miss them.

Frenèl Jean-Dieudonné, our new activities director, has been a big plus. A lot of activities are taking place because of him and he has introduced many changes well. The kids are getting more involved in the daily activities and chores at the orphanage. Organized into seven groups, each day they are responsible for a different chore such as cleaning the houses, picking up trash from the yard, watering plants, and taking water to the filtration system, the kitchen and the laundry. We also started soccer tournaments for the younger boys and the older boys. It is very exciting to watch them play in teams and in uniforms!

We now have our own clinic here on campus. With the help of Wellness Program Coordinator Susan Pleasants and volunteer Katie Gordon, it is up and running. We had our first visit from Dr. Cruff Renard on August 9th and since then he has done check-ups on all 126 kids. We are following up the clinic days with visits to the hospital with some of the children for blood work, PPD tests, X-rays and EKGs.

We are getting the buildings cleaned and the children ready for school. We had a very successful academic year last year, and the boys and girls seem to be very excited to return to school.

2008 SILENT AUCTION

The annual Silent Auction benefitting the orphanage is scheduled for **Saturday, December 6th**, 6:30-9:30 p.m., at St. Mark Catholic Church, 1515 Kempsville Road, Virginia Beach, Va. Tickets will go on sale in November at \$12 each and may be ordered from the auction organizer, Joyce Gridley, at 757-675-6486 or jgridley@cox.net

The planners are giving our auction a fresh face this year with new layout, more varied foods, and items up for bidding.

LIBRARY AND WELLNESS PROGRAM UPDATE

While the flood waters were rising, the children of Maison Fortuné saved both the library books and supplies and the medical charts and supplies in the newly-established clinic. Dr. Cruff Renard, staff physician with Zanmi Lasante (Partners in Health) worked many long hours on his day off each weekend seeing each of the children for their baseline physical exams, finishing up the last weekend in September. Dr. Cruff is now in Boston for a brief clinical rotation at Brigham Women's Hospital, and asked one of his co-workers, Dr. Edgard, to be available if the children should need care.

After the flooding, the Maison Fortuné medical team, consisting of Noë Dorvil, Guilno Cambron, and Dieuphete François, along with our Xaverian Volunteer, Katie Gordon, volunteered at the hospital, working several long days side-by-side with the Zanmi Lasante staff, preparing and distributing emergency resettlement kits for local families who had been devastated by the flooding. As Zanmi Lasante staff member, Cate Oswald, expressed her appreciation for their assistance the boys had big grins on their faces, proud to have been able to help those worse off than themselves.

MAISON FORTUNÉ ORPHANAGE, HINCHE, HAITI

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP CONTRIBUTORS: 2008-2009

Listed below are the individuals & groups that contributed since July 1, 2008 to the day-to-day operating budget (food, clothing, salaries, furniture, etc.) or to the capital budget (for building construction), through the Haitian Ministry Commission of the Diocese of Richmond. We are most grateful; the orphanage could not survive without them.

Richard Antoline
Bernard Brennan
Rev. Msgr. Thomas Caroluzza
Ann Marie Carothers
Dee Christian
Margaret Christian
Mary Ann Collins
Joan Conway
Richard and Gwen Costello
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CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ORPHANAGE FLOOD RELIEF APPEAL

As of October 11, we have received an amazing total of \$80,891.55 in response to our appeal. Thus far about half of that has been spent on the recovery costs. The rest will be applied to our food, clothing, and education costs. Many thanks to you all for your generous response!

Anonymous (2)	David & Lucinda Huffman	Cindy B. Skinner
Angela A. Antoine	Linda Jaglowski	Harrison & Joanne Smith
Kenneth & Donna Blakley	Betty Jones Sarah G. Kachur	Joseph E. Smith
Bon Secours Health System, Inc.	Susan & Michael Kassel	Dr. Will Snuffin
Lindsay V. Burton	Gary & Patricia Kautzmann	SS. Peter & Paul Catholic Church, Palmyra Va.
Katherine L. Byrd	Jon & Ginny Kehoe	St. Mark Catholic Church, Virginia Beach, Va.
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Peter & Kim Catoe, ECR Software Corp.	Martha King	St. Patrick School, Norfolk, Va.
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I am enclosing a check for \$ _____. I would like to designate it for (please check one):

- Orphanage operating budget Chapel Project Vehicle replacement
 Orphanage Endowment Fund Library Project

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Please make checks payable to ***Catholic Diocese of Richmond*** and mail to:
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